DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 820 CE 065 735

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TITLE Standards for Mentoring in Career Development. IEE Brief Number 10.
INSTITUTION Columbia Univ., New York, NY. Inst. on Education and the Economy.
SPONS AGENCY Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.; National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Berkeley, CA.; Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO ISSN-1059-2776
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Development; Career Education; *Educational Benefits; Education Work Relationship; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; Outcomes of Education; *Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; *Standards

ABSTRACT

Program planners considering developing mentoring programs must first consider mentoring's place in the development of career identification/choice and must establish performance standards for mentoring services in career development. Even in the most superficial or limited mentoring experiences, mentors and youths participate in a series of social and psychological interactions resulting in the following outcomes for students: (1) greater access to knowledge; (2) reduced social distance from the world of work; (3) increased achievement orientation; (4) enhanced sense of the ability to achieve; and (5) capacity to use others to further personal career aims. The quality of mentoring and its effect on students can be measured by "authentic assessment" tools, such as portfolios, exhibitions, and student records. In the career development process, mentoring can occur in formal classroom instruction, work experiences, special programs, and/or special services. The quality of mentoring in school settings depends on staff members' ability to incorporate career development concepts/activities into the informal curriculum and consult with/use employers, community groups, and the general public to support schools' career development processes. In many schools, small curriculum/instructional units may be better arrangements for creative use of outsiders than large-scale mentoring programs are. (MN)

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INSTITUTE ON EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

IEE BRIEF

ISSN 1059 2776

Number 10/November 1993

STANDARDS FOR MENTORING IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As with many youth services, we know very little about the effect of mentoring on career development, although intuitively we believe that it must be profound. At heart, mentoring is the passing of craft knowledge and social attitudes from expert to novice, an action that precisely mimics the learning and cultural experiences of every worker on the job. With this in mind, we feel we need only to let mentoring happen for it to have excellent results.

Yet research has shown us that no matter how good the policy or the design of an intervention, some programs are successful and others fail while providing the same service. The difference in outcomes can usually be explained by looking at how the service was provided or the program was managed or the data collected (Hahn, 1992). Establishing performance standards for mentoring services in career development programs, collecting data to measure outcomes, and changing course as needed will increase the chance that the mentoring activity will have the desired effects on the development of the student's career identity and career choice.

To do so, however, program planners first need to consider the place of mentoring in the development of a career identity and a career choice.

Career Identity and the Career Development Process

Career development is a life-long process, but one that can be fostered at all levels of formal schooling, elementary through postsecondary. The National Occupational Information Coordinating Council (1989) has formulated career development competencies for each level of development in the areas of (1) self-concept, interpersonal skills, and developmental changes, (2) educational and training demands for work, and (3) career planning and decision making.

Mentoring can foster the development each of these "competencies." In its essential character, mentoring is a one-to-one relationship of a pair of unrelated persons of different ages, usually carried out over time, and formed to support the development of the younger person, although the mentor also benefits from the relationship. In the career development process, mentoring can particularly affect students' (1) sense of personal efficacy and ability to achieve in the world of work without conflict and inhibition; (2) conception of the structure of opportunities available to them; and (3) knowledge of how to enter, learn, function, and advance in the world of work.

A sense of personal efficacy and capacity for accomplishment is a signal that the student believes that he or she can successfully achieve a desired aim, act autonomously (alone or with others' help), approach tasks flexibly rather than rigidly, and exercise mastery in performing a task. These are usually considered general attributes, not necessarily specific to any task, and they are alterable by cognitive experiences. A sense of self-efficacy comes from past accomplishments, imitation of role models, verbal persuasion, and being confident about carrying out a particular task. To affect the youth's sense of efficacy, the mentor acts as coach in carrying out a particular task so that the student can feel that he or she can do it successfully, and as empathic role model who shows the youth how to influence events without fears of, or actual, failure.

One's sense of available opportunities is also a product of interpersonal and social experiences in the home, school, community, and workplace, which can lead to a youth's distorted or real sense of the structure of occupational opportunities. It is particularly influenced by social and economic conditions and such predisposing factors as race, class, and gender. For example, the perception of disadvantaged youth that they are not "economically efficacious" contributes to their perception of the occupational opportunities available to them (Mortimer, Dennehy & Lee, 1992). To help the student better understand and use available opportunities, the mentor provides accurate information, removes barriers to opportunities, and models behaviors that show how opportunities can be used to one's advantage.

A sense of one's self as a worker comes from the knowledge, acquired both formally and informally, about the task requirements, conventions, and rules for joining, functioning, and succeeding in the workplace. This includes general knowledge about job requirements and work processes, specific knowledge shared by a particular work group or community, and patterns of acceptable communication and social relations. Here too the mentor becomes a trustworthy figure who can introduce the youth into a community of practice and to situations that mirror the demands of the workplace.

Interpersonal, social, and cognitive experiences with the mentor influence the formation of a student's career identity as the youth participates in a community or culture of practice. Through such experiences with an adult (sometimes an older peer) whom the youth learns from, identifies with, or views as a role model, the youth derives a mental representation of work and himself or herself as a worker.

Finding Standards for Mentoring in Career Development

To set a standard is to reach for a point of excellence or achievement in carrying out a particular process: it allows an organization or program to analyze its practices, processes, or outcomes according to this standard in a systematic way. Those serious about improving mentoring processes for career development need to (1) define them and understand how they work, (2) select the most important, those most significant for career development, (3) develop measures of quality,(4) implement changes based on an analysis of the processes, and (5) test the results.

The Two Actions of Mentoring

Even in the most superficial or limited mentoring experience a mentor and youth engage in a joint activity, although sometimes the youth just shadows or observes the mentor, but even here they

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are doing something together. A mentor and youth always share an interpersonal attraction, though again it sometimes may be based only on the mentor's having knowledge or experience the youth wants or needs, the mentor's willingness to provide it, and the youth's sufficient trust, admiration, and respect for the mentor to be willing to participate in the learning or social experience.

We can say then that the mentoring occurs in two spaces: in the observable interaction of the mentor and the youth as they collaborate in a specific activity, and less visibly in the mind of the youth responding psychologically to the mentor and the mentoring experience.

The Social Action of Mentoring

What the youth gains in learning and social competence in the relationship depends on the activities mentor and youth engage in, as well as the psychological quality of their relationship. We can think of an "activity" as: the setting or environment of the mentoring, the verbal and motor actions of the mentor and the youth, and the previous experiences, motives, and conceptions they bring to the relationship. These activities do not have to be invented: everyday life provides many opportunities for the youth to learn something valuable. A mentor's ideas and behaviors are unlikely to have much influence on the youth unless they are embedded in an activity in the daily routines and experiences of the youth.

In the activity the mentor helps the youth successfully carry out a specific, limited aspect of a task by asking a timely question, or providing a verbal or nonverbal hint. The mentor creates a strategy that permits the youth who does not have control over the entire activity to perform successfully on a specific task. The assistance can be tailored and adjusted to the skill or psychological level of the youth. The mentor can also withdraw or reduce assistance when the youth will profit from greater independence. And as the activity proceeds, the mentor can make the work more challenging to the youth.

There are specific techniques for the mentor to help the youth in their joint activity: modeling, feedback, contingency management, instruction, questioning, task structuring, and cognitive structuring. In effective mentoring the mentor and the youth share experiences that provide incentives for the youth's commitment and continued involvement. In their joint activities they come to share word meanings, concepts, motivations, beliefs, and expectations. They develop a common understanding of the purposes and meaning of the activity, and they begin to use common strategies and problem-solving techniques. From all aspects of the interaction the mentor and youth come to share a common emotional and cognitive world.

The Psychological Action of Mentoring

All humans have the capacity to seek out and form relationships with others to get help in meeting challenges at each stage of life. In mentoring, the quality of the attention of the other person, the frequency of the interaction, and the familiarity and social similarity of the mentor and the youth foster the development of the relationship. Successful mentoring then depends on enough interpersonal attraction to initiate and cement the relationship in its early stages.

The interpersonal attraction also depends on whether the mentor can provide what the youth wants and needs. In the mentoring relationship the youth and the mentor enter into a tacit agreement. The mentor takes on different roles, which the youth allows out of a natural need to attach to or identify with someone, or out of practical self-interest.

In the role of *teacher* the mentor instructs or demonstrates a skill or imparts knowledge. The youth accepts the role of learner because he or she recognizes the value of what the mentor is offering. In the role of *advisor* the mentor helps the youth set and achieve goals, motivates the youth, and acts as a constructive critic. The youth is cognitively and emotionally ready to accept this help, with its promise for the future, because it shows the youth the connections between desires, acts, and consequences. The youth also acknowledges the mentor's ability and wisdom: the mentor is viewed as someone who has achieved as an adult and thus is worthy of attention. In the role of *supporter* the mentor provides concern, encouragement, or instrumental help. Out of need, the youth understands the value of this help. In the role of *companion* the mentor is an alternative to peers and family members. The youth enjoys the mentor's company. The companionship may also help the mentor in satisfying other roles for the youth.

A variety of conditions motivate the youth to use the mentor as a role model or resource. The frequency and intimacy of the relationship helps the youth adopt the mentor's patterns of behavior, although the image of the mentor can be retained even without constant interactions if the youth feels that the mentor can empathize with his or her situation, and thus is "there," even if absent. Importantly, this can best occur when the mentor and youth are engaged in a joint activity that is meaningful to the youth.

Mentoring Outcomes for Students in the Career Development Process

We can distinguish several desirable career development outcomes for students resulting from the mentoring:

1. *Greater access to knowledge.* Students should feel that they have more opportunities for obtaining knowledge and learning skills, without bias against them because of their background or previous educational or social experiences. In a related way, the students should become aware of multiple, or even, redundant resources available in the schools, the community, and the workplace for learning and social experiences. Then, not only will the students feel that they have greater opportunities for a career, but they will have increased their understanding of the educational and training requirements for work, and thus can begin their career planning.

2. *A reduction of social distance.* Students should feel less socially isolated from the world of work. Their mentoring experiences in the school and in the workplace should expose them to adults

different from their teachers, parents, and relatives and peers, and thus break down the divisions between the school and the community on the one hand, and schools and the workplace on the other. For many these worlds have been particularly isolated from one another, with their own standards and norms, and with their own adult representatives. The mentoring should provide an opportunity for more and varied experiences in different social settings with more figures outside students' usual environment. It should also introduce students to different communities of practice and work cultures, with their own norms and standards of behavior and performance, in which the students should feel they can take part successfully.

3. *An increased achievement orientation.* Students should understand the expectations and values that lead to achievement, such as the capacity to assume responsibility for carrying out a task and the ability to work cooperatively with others. The ways in which the mentor relates to the students and structures the task should support the development of this orientation. Also, the mentor should be perceived as one who has achieved, whose behaviors and attitudes the students can imitate.

4. *An enhanced sense of the ability to achieve.* Students should develop an intrinsic motivation to achieve. This should come from the opportunity to follow their own interests in carrying out a task meaningful to them, and it can result from their success in achieving a desired aim. The mentor's availability to the youth and his or her teaching and interpersonal "style"—when to provide knowledge, when to model, when to structure activities, when to withdraw—become critical to the students' development of a sense of achievement. The achievement should then become a self-fulfilling prophecy: with the guidance of the mentor, the success of carrying out each task makes achieving the next that much easier.

5. *A capacity to use others to further one's career aims.* Students should be psychologically able to seek help in a work-related activity and have the skills to interact with others. In such activities youth usually tend to become passively dependent on adult help or do not ask for help at all. The mentor's teaching and interpersonal style should foster the students' capacity to seek help when needed to meet an independent goal.

Measures of Student Outcomes

The quality of the mentoring and its effect on student learning, orientations to work, and the students' work itself can be measured by an "authentic assessment" tool. Authentic assessments, currently being called for as alternatives to conventional measures of student progress, most clearly reflect what students have learned, and, more subtly, the influences on that learning. The most common tools are (1) portfolios—open-ended, on-going records of student work, (2) exhibitions—student artifacts, creations, and performances, and (3) records—on-going student assessments of their own progress and strengths and weaknesses.

Authentic measures of student work reflect the changing role of the teacher-as-mentor and outsider-as-mentor in judging student work. These mentors help students plan their work, read drafts and review prototypes, and make suggestions. What is more, the goal of mentoring to make youth more self-monitoring can be met by the authentic assessment. As part of the authentic assessment, students take responsibility for their own work: they are increasingly expected to select their own projects, and, having done so, to make sure that the work gets done. Although the mentor is available for consultation and coaching, the students must be self-reliant. The teacher, supervisor, or mentor may make independent evaluations of the students' work, but the student is also expected to be self-evaluative, and to accept that continuous assessment is a natural part of their work. In this way the students better understand their abilities, strive to learn and accomplish more, and accept their limitations (Hill and Larsen, 1992).

Organization of Career Development Mentoring

Mentoring in the career development process can be a curricular, co-curricular, or extracurricular activity, and be both planned and adventitious. It occurs in several school-related settings.

1. *In formal classroom instruction.* This is especially evident in classrooms where instruction is contextualized in a problem requiring the integration of abstract (academic) and functional (vocational) knowledge. In such classrooms, the teacher acts as the mentor or coach to the student because the curriculum is organized to develop career competencies, and the schooling inherently develops the students' sense of themselves as workers. But even in more traditional classrooms, career development activities are often integrated into the English, science, or math curriculum, and students are exposed to the world of work through visiting lecturers. Although the outsider is not a mentor in the truest sense, he or she may sufficiently attract the student's interests so that the student uses the information the speaker provides to create a mental representation of some technical, social, or cultural aspect of the world of work. Students also frequently visit the workplace and "shadow" workers in a variety of jobs as part of an informal curriculum for learning about careers.

2. *In work experiences.* Students, especially in vocational, technical, and work- or career-related instructional programs (e.g., tech prep, career academies, and cooperative education) learn on the job and obtain skills that are integrated with and complement the formal classroom instruction. In character these educational experiences resemble youth apprenticeships, in which an expert mentors the novice for entering into and functioning in the world of work. It is likely in the future, moreover, that all students will have work experiences as one of their educational requirements for graduation from high school, and thus will have more organized mentoring experiences.

3. *In special programs.* A large number of auxiliary programs, sometimes in-

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tegrated into the formal school program but frequently supplementary, assign mentors to students to help them academically and socially to become occupationally competent. These sometimes are known as "mentoring programs," but they include tutoring programs, pregnancy prevention and parenting programs, cultural enrichment, and pre-employment programs.

4. *In special services.* Many schools provide students employment-related services (placement, assistance in getting working papers, advice about interviewing skills) during schooling and after graduation, counseling in choosing curriculum related to vocational interests, and a variety of special school activities to expose students to careers. When these services are organized into visible centers of activity, such as offices accessible to students, the staff often become mentors to students and provide psychological and instrumental help.

Organizational Process Mentoring for Career Development

The quality of mentoring in a school setting will depend on the skills of the staff in understanding how to incorporate career development concepts and activities into the informal curriculum of the school, and to consult with and use employers, community groups, and the general public to support the career development process in the schools. In program implementation, staff need to be aware of models of mentoring for career development, including barriers to their adoption (see below), and to establish partnerships with and linkages to community-based organizations and the workplace, which are sources of mentors and resources for exposing the students to career life.

The success of this organizational effort can be measured by the extent of (1) the use of outsiders to integrate career development perspectives in the formal curriculum, as classroom instructors, speakers, or even partners in curriculum planning, (2) the formal and informal opportunities for students to observe or learn from a mentor in a community setting or on-the-job, and (3) the kinds of special services in the school that have mentoring features.

Many schools, particularly urban schools, however, are not structured to provide an academically and vocationally integrated education for career development and thus for institutionalizing mentoring as part of it. First, most high schools stratify students into academic, vocational, and general tracks, with none of the students in any of the tracks given any instruction meaningfully related to the planning and development of a career. Second, despite the rhetoric to the contrary, schools have found no way to meaningfully use employers and representatives of the community to educate students. This may reflect an ingrained belief that only educational professionals have the particular subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical skills to instruct students, despite challenging evidence to the contrary that shows that other adults in nonformal school settings also teach, motivate, and change the cognitive and social behaviors of youth. The achievement of a professional culture in the schools has been a barrier to the use of nonschool staff as educators. Third, schools, particularly large schools, by necessity depend on scheduling, which works against the flexible use of outsiders in the school. The sheer planning and movement of large numbers of students and the work assignment of large numbers of teachers and administrators make it difficult to be flexible. In addition, school administrators have too much fear about the loss of control over the enterprise. Like many other educational reforms, smaller curriculum and instructional units—such as curriculum clusters or academy or theme arrangements, sometimes within schools—are better arrangements for the creative use of outsiders. And these outsiders can play a central role in mentoring for career development.

— **Erwin Flaxman**

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This publication was developed with support from the Ford Foundation and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE), funded by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Educational Act.